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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5096
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1110
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 9878
RUEHK/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 4316
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1776
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 3508
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0488
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 6977
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 4594
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2839
RHEHN/NSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0488
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 RANGOON 001327

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STATE FOR EAP ASSISTANT SECRETARY CHRISTOPHER HILL, IO
ASSISTANT SECRETARY SILVERBERG, DRL ASSISTANT SECRETARY
LOWENKRON, EAP/MLS; USUN FOR AMBASSADOR SANDERS; PACOM FOR
FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/12/2016

TAGS: PGOV PHUM ECON PREL BM

SUBJECT: PREPARING GAMbari FOR HIS NEXT VISIT TO BURMA

REF: A. RANGOON 732 (DEMOCRACY AWAITS ANOTHER DAY)

- 1B. RANGOON 700 (NLD REACTION TO GAMbari VISIT)
- 1C. RANGOON 1232 (ICRC ACCESS)
- 1D. RANGOON 679 (GAMbari BRIEFING)
- 1E. RANGOON 530 (NLD OFFER TO THE REGIME)
- 1F. RANGOON 155 (NATIONAL CONVENTION RECESSES)
- 1G. RANGOON 79 (LEON DE RIEDMATTEN)

Classified By: CDA Shari Villarosa for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: Post supports U/SYG Gambari's efforts to foster dialogue in Burma, but another trip stage-managed by the regime would be counterproductive. The regime's extension of Aung San Suu Kyi's house arrest shortly after Gambari's last visit was a slap in the face of the UN. Gambari needs to deliver a strong message to the regime that the international community expects concrete actions that show the regime has the political will to move Burma toward democracy. This includes genuine dialogue with the pro-democracy opposition and ethnic minority representatives, as well as the resumption of ICRC visits to Burmese prisoners. We should emphasize to Gambari that the National Convention can be a vehicle for bringing democracy to Burma only if the regime allows more inclusive participation and real debate. End Summary.

12. (C) The UN has publicly acknowledged it is considering sending Gambari on a second visit, possibly in October. The UNSC will also be discussing Burma this month. Post offers the following thoughts on how the UN can best advance a viable transition to democracy in Burma

Emphasize Results

13. (C) Post believes the UN has the potential to play a constructive role in bringing all parties to the table for a genuine dialogue on a realistic transition to democracy in

Burma. However, the U.S. and democratically-minded countries should remain actively engaged to divert the UN from blessing actions that the regime labels as steps toward democracy, which are in fact carefully manipulated shams that exclude the pro-democracy opposition and maintain the military's chokehold on power.

¶ 14. (C) It is no coincidence that the regime announced that the National Convention would resume October 10, immediately after the U.S. announcement that it would seek to place Burma on the UNSC agenda, and no coincidence that Gambari reportedly plans a return visit in October. Many here believe that Gambari is ready to side with the regime by blessing the National Convention as the way forward. NLD leaders who met with Gambari in May told us he pressured them to rejoin the National Convention as a face-saving gesture to the regime (Ref B). We need to emphasize to Gambari that the National Convention can only be a vehicle for bringing democracy to Burma if it is substantially revised to permit real debate, public discussion, and more representative participation. Asking the NLD to rejoin the process without addressing the issues that muted its voice and caused it to leave will not be good enough. Gambari should deliver a strong message during his second visit that the UN and the international community expect concrete evidence of political will from the regime to move Burma toward democracy.

Bring NLD and the Ethnics In

¶ 15. (C) The regime continues to isolate, harass, and arrest members of the opposition. Gambari's visit could be useful in leveling the playing field if he emphasized to the regime

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that they must include the NLD in any political discussion as a step forward. The international community cannot allow the results of the 1990 election to be ignored or forgotten. Popularly-elected representatives should not be bound by a roadmap imposed by the generals. The NLD put forward a compromise offer to the SPDC on February 12 and again on April 21 that offers the best opportunity in years for compromise and a meaningful dialogue (Ref E). These offers appealed to the regime to form a People's Parliament, based on the results of the 1990 elections, which would in turn recognize the ruling State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) as a transitional "legitimate ruling council." The offer also underscored the need to include ethnic groups in the political dialogue and included an appeal to work together to meet the humanitarian needs of the Burmese people.

Push for Access for Humanitarian Agencies

¶ 16. (C) Gambari should also be prepared to discuss the continuing restrictions for international humanitarian agencies. During his May visit, he cited this area as having the best potential for early action. Nevertheless, we have seen no concrete progress yet. Not only are foreign providers of assistance still restricted from traveling to project sites, local NGOs are now being ordered to cease their humanitarian activities. Gambari should insist specifically that the regime permit the ICRC to resume unaccompanied visits to prisons and labor camps. Until recently, ICRC has been active and effective in Burma, improving conditions for prisoners, providing prosthetics and physical rehabilitation for thousands of land mine victims, and protecting internally displaced persons (Ref C). It has earned worldwide respect for its impartiality and discretion in promoting international humanitarian law.

Consult the Experts

¶ 17. (C) Post recommends urging Gambari to meet with Leon de

Riedmatten, who was a principal mediator between ASSK and the regime, before he returns to Burma for another visit. De Riedmatten is a skilled and credible diplomat who has for over a decade been closely involved in international efforts to achieve an inclusive political dialogue in Burma. He is a trusted confidant of Aung San Suu Kyi. De Riedmatten also was the former head of the ICRC in Burma and served for several years as former UN Special Envoy Razali's liaison to the regime and the pro-democracy opposition (Ref G). We believe it would be worth Gambari's time to speak with someone who has dealt extensively with both sides and can explain what approaches have been tried before, and offer valuable insights. De Riedmatten will be in the Washington September 25 and 26 and would be willing to travel to New York September 27.

Control the Schedule

¶8. (C) While Gambari's first visit resulted in meetings with the two senior generals and Aung San Suu Kyi, the regime tightly scripted his agenda, directing that all meetings with the NLD and ASSK take place at the Government Guest House (where they could be easily monitored). Gambari met with no representatives of ethnic minority parties. The regime even tried to prevent him from visiting UN staff in their offices, which he managed to evade. A second visit should remain under UN control to ensure that he meets not only with representatives of the GOB and the NLD, but also with leaders of Burma's ethnic minorities. In addition, the UN should

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insist that Gambari be permitted to visit people where they prefer, rather than on GOB miked premises. Specifically, he should insist on meeting Aung San Kyi at her compound.

¶9. (C) Comment: We should support Gambari's efforts and encourage the UN to stay engaged in helping to find common ground between the regime and its political opponents. The first visit permitted Gambari and Than Shwe to get acquainted. On his second visit, Gambari needs to show Than Shwe that he is serious about seeking progress by offering specific suggestions. Otherwise Gambari's involvement becomes just another excuse the regime will cite (as their Foreign Minister just did at the ASEM Summit in Helsinki) to avoid substantive discussion. This is also the appropriate time to divert Gambari from taking the path of least resistance and endorsing the sham National Convention. End Comment.

VILLAROSA